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## Reports from the Caspian Sea

~~Sea~~ One of the most productive fishing areas in the world is in the Caspian ~~Sea~~ Sea. The sturgeon takes first place; both its meat and its roe are consumed. In addition, salmon, shad, Wobla (related to our roach), carp and bream are of great importance. No precise statistics are available on catches. To be sure "Pravda" reported a yearly figure of 160,000 tons, but an American estimate places yearly production at 600,000 tons, to which more than 3,500,000 [a.c.] tons of sturgeon roe must be added.

Fishing here is also collectivized. There are actually still a few independent fishermen, but they receive no state support; they use primitive methods and contribute little to the total production. The Koakhsos, on the other hand, use the most modern equipment, are otherwise provided with ~~the~~ all necessary materials, and are directed to the fishing grounds by aircraft and helicopters. Recent attempts have even been made to lay out nets by aircraft, and to unload fish with vacuum pumps, but nothing is known as to the success of these attempts.

The number of persons employed along the 6,730 kilometers of coast on the Caspian Sea is estimated at 70,000. In addition, four scientific stations have been set up for the Caspian Sea. Naturally changes are ~~making~~ <sup>taking</sup> place ~~here~~ here which threaten the future of fishing. During the last few years evaporation has dried up more than 100,000 hectares. During the last nine years the water level has dropped two meters. If this process continues, the water level will <sup>have dropped</sup> ~~drop~~ another three meters in about ten years more, and fishing will have come to an end. Since 1939 the Caspian has lost over 734 billion cubic meters of water, an amount which could cover the entire Iberian peninsula to a depth of one meter.

The salt content is very different in different parts of the Caspian Sea. As far as 20 kilometers from the mouth of the Volga the water is still fresh and potable. In the actual Caspian basin the salt content is quite considerable in some places. However, the salt content is increasing steadily with the reduction in the quantity of water. Many biological changes are bound up with these developments, and science has therefore been called upon

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to find some means of remedying the situation. A first attempt, which was successful, was the transplanting of a certain type of worm from the Sea of Azov to the Caspian, in order to revive the fauna on which the other ~~mar~~ marine life feeds. Experiments with the artificial breeding of sturgeon were unsuccessful, as they have also been elsewhere. ~~The~~ A successful attempt has been made to promote the reproduction of other fish by raising them under natural conditions. A large number of experiments are being undertaken here to increase the stock of fish.

In order to improve the water conditions mentioned above a number of plans have been proposed, some of which are quite fantastic. One plan, which appears to be not too difficult to put into practice, is to eliminate the large swamp areas around the mouth of the Volga. Three other plans, however, sound quite fantastic. One calls for connecting the Caspian with the Black Sea. The second proposed diverting large Asiatic rivers, and the third suggests causing North-Russian rivers, which now empty into the Arctic Ocean, to flow into the Caspian.

From "La Pêche Maritime"

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